When Technicolor Holds The Mirror Up to Nature

Why You Will Find the Picture So Perfect That You Cannot Tell the Reflection From the Original

By Harriette Underhill

"Don't shoot till you see the whites of their eyes!" That is what Joseph Schenck said to Dr. Daniel Comstock only recently, and probably both of them were so excited that neither of them noticed that Mr. Schenck was emulating the commander who issued his now famous order at the time of the Bunker Hill disturbance. Dr. Comstock repeated it to us yesterday, without getting the significance of it, either, so we called his attention to it. It happened thus: Dr. Comstock is one of the inventors of the new Technicolor process which was used in the making of that exquisite new picture, "Toll of the Sea." Joseph Schenck is interested financially and otherwise, so when Dr. Comstock had some finished samples he begged for Mr. Schenck's honest opinion. "I have only one fault to find. The eyes aren't quite clear. Try a little more light and then don't shoot till you see the whites of their eyes." Of course, every one who knows anything about pictures knows that photographing a scene is called shooting. Anyway, Dr. Comstock took Mr. Schenck's advice, and the result is a picture in nature's own colors and without a flaw.

Colored pictures always have fascinated us. When we first began to review photoplays the Technicolor produced its first picture, called "The Gulf Between." The color in this early sample was as lovely as one could wish and far more satisfactory than any of the various processes which we have since seen. But there were features about it which made it impractical; so everybody set to work again to try to perfect it, and if one may judge from "Toll of the Sea," which was shown last week at the Rialto Theater, they have succeeded.

What we were most anxious to learn from Dr. Comstock was why this new Technicolor process has no fringes, flashes nor deep shadows. The actors on the screen appear to be real people walking about on the stage, not shadows on a screen. The face tints are absolutely natural and it is not necessary for the actors to put on any make-up, either. The exteriors are taken in the sunlight and the interiors are photographed under a strong arc light. Whatever is in front of the camera is photographed on the negative exactly as it appears, in color, tone and shape. Now, every color process is the result of throwing two colors on the screen, red and green, and letting the eye do the rest. One of the older processes had red and green screens through which the pictures were projected. These were in the form of shutters, and if at any time the film had suddenly stopped you would have seen reflected on the screen either a bright red or a bright green picture. Then there is the film which is made up of two celluloid strips pasted together—one green and one red. Still another process had a red film and a green one projected simultaneously on the screen by two different machines, and this is why most of the pictures done in natural colors are not clearly outlined—the pictures projected by this process are bound to be a little out of focus either in the foreground or the background.

Another common fault with colored pictures is the fact that it is almost impossible to lighten them. The shadows, being a combination of red and green, appear dark brown, and the pictures are about the color that nature appears when you view her through dark amber glasses.

"Now why," we asked of Dr. Comstock, "are the outlines in your pictures clear and perfect as in life?"

"That was the first thing I realized we must overcome, and it was difficult, but at the present time our camera takes simultaneously and at exactly the same angle two pictures—one of which will record red, yellow and orange and the other green, blue and violet. Then we print this negative and alternate the colors, so that there are two pictures on the finished film side by side exactly alike, but differing in sensitiveness. After that this film is passed through a dye and the different tones in the film will take some colors and reject others. When this film is projected on the screen you get the effect which you saw in 'Toll of the Sea.'"

It seems natural to suppose that since there are two pictures, instead of one, recording each pose that the film must be run off twice as fast as the ordinary film, though we forgot to ask about this. The second thing we asked of the inventor fas "How do you manage to keep your pictures so light and the tints so delicate? The colors are nature's own."

"And there is another thing with which we had to reckon. And Dr. Comstock replied: 'That is because we experimented until we found the right sort of film. It is what I call panchromatic film and if a shadow is grey it does not record it as black. It was a long and tiresome investigation this search for the film absolutely suited to the purpose, but we have found it—a trouble that the layman knows very little about. Did you know that celluloid changes its shape and size all the time as the weather changes? That was something that gave us a great deal of worry, but we have it so perfect now that if the film should shrink 20 per cent, which, of course, it will not do, we could still have the picture intact when it was projected. So that is all there is to it. Just be sure that you know how to shoot two pictures, a red, orange, yellow one and a green, violet, blue one, from exactly the same angle, that you have the correct sort of film and that you know how to correct the evils of shrinking and you may just go ahead and make pictures as beautiful as Technicolor. And Dr. Comstock says that it will be possible to have all pictures in the future made in these beautiful colors because the cost is not prohibitive. No one will be allowed to go ahead and use this process by himself, but Technicolor will photograph any picture for any company if the company so desires. At least that is the way we understand it, although at present the Metro has the rights to the one perfect sample which Technicolor has made."

"A Blind Bargain" Shows Advantages Of Screen Over Stage

One of the greatest two-fisted, knock-'em-down-and-drag-'em-out fights ever put on nightly behind the footlights was the one in which John Barrymore took a 50 per cent—at least—share when he was playing in "Kick In." There have been other rather juicy set-to's on the stage, but that one certainly is good enough for the present purpose.

The present purpose is to state unequivocally that fights on the spoken stage may be good now and then, but they don't hold a candle, as the saying goes, to the fights before the motion picture camera.

On the stage the actors not only have an opportunity but must fight every weekday night, not counting a couple of weekday afternoons; on the screen they only maul each other once, or at most, allowing for rehearsals, two or three times. Then they're through—in more ways than one. In a whole lot of screen fights the participants couldn't have put it on again to save their necks. Yet their one endeavor is multiplied sixty or a hundred times and keeps repeating itself through as many projecting machines the world over, for nobody can estimate how many years.

It's the same way with sets. They can't wreck a big set—really wreck it, that is—on the stage every night, not counting those aforesaid two matinee afternoons. But they can do it in the movies. And they sure do.

It's the same way with scenery. Great artists paint it for the stage. Super-fine lenses can the real thing for the movies.

It's the same way with crowds. On the stage they get a couple of dozen chaps at a dollar or so the evening to moan like lost souls. That makes a couple of thousand in a mob. Thirty or forty of these moaners make a million. On the screen they have the million. They've got the whole landscape in which to herd the million. They only have to herd 'em once. And the job is done. No moans are necessary.

Take fires. They have real ones in the movies. Train wrecks? What do a couple of passenger trains amount to in the expenses of putting on a big picture?

On the stage the hero is planning to rob a bank or do something equally exciting, but the heroine praying for him in London is invisible, unless she writes a letter, or a little bird walks on the stage and tells about it. In the movies such a situation is easy. You can see what's happening in London—and the real London at that—one minute, and what's transpiring in Oshkosh the next minute.

And did you ever hear of the same actor, playing two different parts, meeting himself and talking to himself with every appearance of reality on the speaking stage? Chances are you didn't. But it's being done, and one of the most artistic ways it's being done lately was by Lon Chaney, the "man of a thousand faces," in Goldwyn's "A Blind Bargain." "A Blind Bargain" is coming to the Capitol this Sunday, and that's what recalled the matter to our attention. Lon Chaney is an insane doctor in one character and a victim of the doctor's insanity in the other character. The two characters meet frequently, but—and they say it's because of the miracle called "double exposure" and the clever use of a metronome to get the timing right—the probabilities are that few spectators, if they hadn't been warned by their programs, would know that the two figures on the screen really were the same person.

"A Blind Bargain" teaches one of the big truths of this new age we're living in—if it doesn't teach anything else; and that is that the movies have some attributes that the stage never has had, never can have, and never will have. The movies have the world for a stage—old Dame Nature herself for a scene designer; the power of showing action in widely separated spots at the same time; the advantage of only having to have players go through the same violent scene once at its best and not on many consecutive occasions; the privilege of destroying sets after one use (witness the use of 200 barrels of soap, a gas tank and what not in that same "A Blind Bargain" for instance, to give the effect of a soap bubble ballet); and the advantage of permitting the same great player not only to play in two different rôles, but the power of deception that serves to hide the subterfuge, and make both characters seem as real as if they had been played by two different persons.

The movies may be a couple of laps behind the stage in some respects, but they might be said to be a nose ahead in others. If not, how about those histrionic fights?

"Broken Wing" on the Screen

B. P. Schulberg, president of Preferred Pictures, has secured the screen rights to "The Broken Wing," Paul Dickey's and Charles W. Goddard's comedy drama.

Agnes Ayres

In "A Daughter of Luxury," at the Rialto

"Covered Wagon" Is Paramount's Most Ambitious Effort

The making of Emerson Hough's "The Covered Wagon" undoubtedly is Paramount's most ambitious production undertaking, and in the filming of this epic of the West, adapted for the screen by Jack Cunningham, James Cruze has taken one of the most difficult directorial assignments in motion picture history.

Early last month Cruze left for Baker, Nev., accompanied by 100 technical assistants, the vanguard of an army of 3,000, who are to be in camp for nearly two months on an immense 200,000-acre ranch.

Later the same week Charles Ogle, Alan Hale, Ernest Torrence, Tully Marshall and Guy Oliver went direct to Antelope Island in the middle of the Great Salt Lake. There they were met by Director Cruze and are now engaged in staging a big buffalo hunt. On this island is the largest herd of American bison remaining in the United States, the group numbering nearly 500. This is the herd whose extermination by hunters was threatened a couple of years ago until a storm of protest from all parts of the country intervened.

Following the completion of the buffalo hunt scenes this company will rejoin the throng at Baker, where at the Baker ranch the other big episodes of the story of pioneer life are to be filmed. Some of the outstanding features will be an immense prairie fire, attacks by Indians upon a large village which is being completely built on the prairie, the breaking of horses and oxen for ranch use by a group of 100 cowboys and the trek of an immense wagon train across the plains.

To transport the throng of people and mass of material fifty railroad cars were required. In addition to these about one thousand Indians, squaws and papooses have been migrating overland to the Nevada location.

The Baker ranch now looks like the show grounds of a big circus, with its scores of motor trucks and prairie schooners, tons of supplies and equipment, hundreds of people of all types and thousands of animals—in fact, eliminating the modern motor trucks and electrical equipment, the scene of activity is quite comparable to those of the early days of the wagon trains during the great gold rush.

"Spider and the Rose" Goes on the Screen

Bennie Zeidman, the child producer, is at it again. Now he is going to do "The Spider and the Rose," and just because he has fourteen stars he is going to put them all in one picture. They are Alice Lake, Gaston Glass, Robert McKim, Noah Beery, Frank Campeau, Edwin Stevens, Joseph Dowling, Otis Harlan, Alec Francis, little Richard Headrick, Andrew Arbuckle, Harry Northrup and the inimitable Louise Fazenda.

"The Spider and the Rose" is a magazine story, written by Gerald C. Duffy. It is a romance of the old Spanish days in California, brimming with dramatic situation and action as well as atmospheric beauty. E. Richard Schayer adapted the story to the screen and Jack McDermott is directing the production. Glen MacWilliams is the cinematographer.

Cast Complete for Ballin's Picture of "Vanity Fair"

George Walsh has been added to the cast of "Vanity Fair," which Hugo Ballin is making for Goldwyn. This will be the first time George has played anything save a "stunt" role. Others in the cast are Mabel Ballin as Becky Sharp and Hobart Bosworth as Lord Steyne. Walsh will be seen as Rawdon Crowley.

Elsie Ferguson

In "Outcast," at the Rivoli Theater

Vaudeville

PALACE—Marion Harris, Four Mortons, the Doners, Gordon Dooley and Martha Morton, Clark and Bergman, Ted Lorraine and Jack Minto, assisted by Margaret Davies; Will Mahoney, William Halligan, in "Highlowbrow"; others.

RIVERSIDE—Raymond Hitchcock, Irving Fisher and Renee Robert and Glers-Dorf Symphonists, Bert Levy, "Around the Corner," others.

COLONIAL—Irene Franklin, Lewis and Dody, Joe Browning, Valerie Bergere, "Oklahoma" Bob Albright, Maurice Diamond, Joe Roberts, others.

EIGHTY-FIRST STREET—Bert and Betty Wheeler, William and Joe Mandel, Owen McGiveney, Dotson, in their own specialties and in "The Wager," an afterpiece. "Ebb Tide," film.

FORDHAM—First half: Miss Patricola, Tom Patricola, with Harrietta Towne, others. "Singed Wings," picture. Second half: Aunt Jemima and Band, others. "Ebb Tide."

HAMILTON—First half: Deagon and Mack, Pisano and Landauer, others. "Ebb Tide." Second half: Ona Munson and company, Mignon, others. "The Impossible Mrs. Bellew," picture.

MOSS'S BROADWAY—Cecile Weston, Miller and Mack, Allman and Harvey, Kennedy and Kramer, Arena Brothers, others. Reginald Denny, in "The Kentucky Derby," new picture.

LOEW'S AMERICAN—First half: "Creole Cocktail," others. Wallace Reid, in "Clarence." Second half: Cosmopolitan Dancers, others. "Trifling Women."

LOEW'S STATE—First half: "Four Queens and a Joker," others. "The Streets of New York," picture. Second half: Grace Cameron, Sonia Baraban, others. "Trifling Women."

CENTRAL—"Twentieth Century Revue," Shubert vaudeville unit. Four Marx Brothers, Olga Mishka and others.

PROCTOR'S FIFTH AVENUE—First half: Franklin Farnum and company, Corinne Tilton, Bostock's Riding School, others. Second half: California Ramblers, Henry and Moore, others.

PROCTOR'S TWENTY-THIRD STREET—First half: Aunt Sally and her Alabama Boys, others. Charles Ray in "The Tailor Made Man," picture. Second half: Gus King's Melody Land, others. "Ebb Tide," film.

PROCTOR'S FIFTY-EIGHTH STREET First half: Louis Seymour and company, Sandy Shaw, others. Hope Hampton in "The Light in the Dark," picture. Second half: Stella Mayhew, others. "Ebb Tide."

Picture Theaters

ASTOR—"The Town That Forgot God," Fox production. Sixth week.

CAMEO—"The Super-Sex," adapted from a story by Frank R. Adams. Robert Gordon, Charlotte Pierce, Tully Marshall and others in the cast.

CAPITOL—"A Blind Bargain," a Goldwyn picture, made from a story by Barry Pain. Lon Chaney, Jacqueline Logan and others in the cast. A single reel film explaining the Einstein theory; other films, orchestral, vocal, ballet and instrumental specialties.

CRITERION—Marion Davies in "When Knighthood Was in Flower," thirteenth week.

LYRIC—Douglas Fairbanks in "Robin Hood."

RIALTO—Agnes Ayres in "A Daughter of Luxury," adapted from "The Impostor," a play by Leonard Merrick and Michael Morton. Other films, orchestral, vocal, dance features.

RIVOLI—Elsie Ferguson in "Outcast," in which she appeared on the legitimate stage. David Powell, William David, Mary MacLaren, others, in the cast. Other films, instrumental, vocal, orchestral numbers.

SELWYN—D. W. Griffith will revive "The Birth of a Nation" for a week, beginning to-morrow.

STRAND—Maurice Tourneur's production of "Lorna Doone." Madge Bellamy plays the title role, and John Bowers, Frank Keenan, Donald Macdonald and others are in the cast. A Fokine ballet, other films, orchestral contributions, and a vocal and scenic prologue.

Three Successes in a Row Is Season's Score Thus Far for Arthur Hopkins

John Barrymore's triumph in and as "Hamlet" at the Sam H. Harris Theater was a triumph; also for Arthur Hopkins, the producer. Quite aside from the eulogistic greetings of his direction, "Hamlet" marked the third success which Mr. Hopkins had brought to Broadway in the course of the year. In two of the three cases, Robert Edmond Jones shared the honors with Mr. Hopkins.

"The Old Soak" was Mr. Hopkins's first production. It was one of the comedy hits of the season. Then came "Rose Bernd," with Ethel Barrymore, the performance being generally accepted as her best. Now comes "Hamlet," with brother John's interpretation of the melancholy Dane hailed as the finest of this generation.

Only last week "The Old Soak" celebrated its one hundredth birthday. "Al" continues to bootleg in a manner to make even William Jennings Bryan see the humor of prohibition, and the hired girl continues to tell the sad story of her parrot—"Nellie was a Lady!"

In a season which has been distinguished by much fine acting, it is doubtful if the performance of Harry Beresford as "The Old Soak" and Robert E. O'Connor as "Al" have been surpassed. Mr. Beresford took Mr. Marquis's character and lent it a genial reality which actually lives up to the conception of the author—a rare thing, as any author will admit. As for Mr. O'Connor, he is "Al," once the czar behind the bar—albeit a human, easy-going czar; but now reduced to the comparative ignominy of bootlegging. With the "Old Soak" he keeps alive the traditions of another day. Nothing daunts him—and particularly not the Eighteenth Amendment. His profession is chosen not for greed, be it understood, but because of "a friendly feeling for liquor." You may say what you want about him, but "Al" has a soul.

Buddy Messenger a Star

Julius Stern, president of Century Film Corporation, will shortly announce a series of small town boy stories featuring Buddy Messenger, the first of which will be called "Kid Gladiators." Among the supporting cast will be Marjorie Marcel and Joe Bonner.

Jacqueline Logan

In "A Blind Bargain," at the Capitol

Brooklyn Theaters

MONTAUK — Marjorie Rambeau in "The Goldfish."

MAJESTIC—Willie and Eugene Howard in "The Passing Show of 1922."

BUSHWICK — Eddie Foy and the younger Foys, "China Blue Plate," Santos and Hayes, Rita Gould, Gene Cass, Al Wohlman, William Ebs, Greene and Parker, others.

ORPHEUM—Fanny Brice, Yvette Rugel, Edna Aug, "The Weak Spot," Shaw and Lee, Weber and Ridnor, Jack Little, The Stanley Brothers, Four Tanarakis, others.

SHUBERT-CRESCENT — Fanny and Kitty Watson in "Stolen Sweets," Shubert vaudeville unit. Harry Steppe and Harry O'Neil, Berkes and Brazil, DeKoch Trio, Five Kings of Syncopation, others.

LOEW'S METROPOLITAN—First half: Mabel Blondell Revue, Tilyou and Rogers, others. Second half: Eddie Foyer, others. "Trifling Women" will be the feature film all week

STRAND — Constance Talmadge in "East Is West," from the play by Samuel Shipman and John B. Hymer. Other films, instrumental, vocal and orchestral numbers.

Outlying Houses

SHUBERT-RIVIERA—Joseph Schildkraut and Eva Le Gallienne will play a return engagement of a week in the Theater Guild's production of "Liliom," beginning to-morrow night.

BRONX OPERA HOUSE—Barney Bernard and Alexander Carr, en route to Chicago, will stop off here for a week in "Partners Again."